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SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ETTC](#) [KOMC](#) [NU](#)
SUBJECT: NICARAGUA: BLUE LANTERN 050193786

REF: STATE 110404

[¶1.](#) On November 16, Econoff and ARSO met with Ligia Aleman, owner of Nuevo Impacto, at her store located on Camino Oriental in Managua. In resp

[¶2.](#) Nuevo Impacto is authorized by the Nicaraguan National Police to import and sell firearms. There are only seven other regulated firearms retailers in the country, according to Aleman. In addition to these retailers, to whom she occasionally sells wholesale, Aleman sells to private security companies. She also sells to individuals who provide evidence that they are authorized by the Police to carry firearms. Requirements include a psychological evaluation, background check, and weapons familiarization training. Aleman stated that many of the individuals who purchase her guns work on farms or ranches and wish to have a gun not only for self-defense, but also to project the "cowboy" image. She further reported interest in purchasing smaller pistols, such as the 9mm Cobras, for women, who are a growing customer base because of increasing crime in Nicaragua. She was able to produce electronic and paper records documenting her purchases and sales, including the order from Valor Corporation (reftel).

[¶3.](#) Local media reports concerning straw purchases and illicit exports appear to have exaggerated the role of Nuevo Impacto. Police initially implicated Nuevo Impacto in the arrest of Perci Alvarado Villagran for arms smuggling. Media reports indicated that Alvarado had ties to the Sinaloa drug cartel and was transporting the guns to narcotraffickers in Honduras. After questioning Alvarado, the police arrested Roger Monge, who appeared to have facilitated the purchase of the seized weapons on behalf of Alvarado, an act that violated Nicaraguan law regulating gun ownership. The press reported that Monge contacted individual buyers to make gun purchases and then purchased the guns from the buyers and passed them on to Alvarado.

[¶4.](#) Police uncovered evidence that individuals hired by Monge presented fraudulently obtained permits at Nuevo Impacto to purchase guns. Aleman told Econoff that she was attending a gun show in the United States when the buyers with fraudulent ID made their purchases, and she acknowledged that her employees did not recognize the pattern of suspicious purchases. However, Aleman asserts that the purchases were made by buyers who had legal permits from the National Police. Law 510 (2005) for the Control and Regulation of Arms, Munitions and Explosives states that the Police certify whether an individual can purchase firearms. As the individuals buying weapons from Nuevo Impacto had the proper documentation, there was no legal reason to deny their purchases. She said that the fact that the purchasers were buying on behalf of an alleged arms dealer could not have reasonably been known to the employees of Nuevo Impacto; each had a valid gun permit issued by the Police. Econoff spoke with Comisionado Horacio Sobalvarro, Chief of the Weapons Division of the National Police, and he confirmed that they had not found any wrongdoing on the part of Nuevo Impacto or any other gun stores.

[¶5.](#) The store's physical security is inadequate, even in comparison with most other gun stores in Nicaragua. The guns were displayed in glass cases which could be easily broken. The storefront is glass, without any metal curtains, and there is no safe for overnight storage. The employees claimed that there was a working alarm system but when pressed for details admitted that it did not work. The store is protected by a roving guard who also monitors several other businesses near Nuevo Impacto.

COMMENT

[¶6.](#) We have found no evidence that Nuevo Impacto or its employees were complicit in the illegal transfer of arms. Aleman satisfactorily answered CALLAHAN